

Iron Age Pottery from Ashtead, Surrey

The Ottways Lane assemblage

by
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Technical report 7

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(text commissioned by Archaeology South-East)

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1. Introduction

The present assemblage provides a welcome opportunity to examine a range of associated Surrey IA pottery forms and fabrics. Not only does it provide a new dot on our distribution maps of the period, but, by adding to our detailed knowledge of Surrey IA pottery, it makes it easier to contextualize material of this date. The assemblage comprises 165 sherds weighing 1972 grams. Most are from small context assemblages but sufficient are associated for the group as a whole to be interpretatively useful. In all thirteen fabrics were distinguished ([Table 1](#)). On the basis of their internal associations and comparisons with fabrics from other Surrey and non-Surrey sites, these can be shown to straddle three distinct prehistoric periods, LBA/EIA, MIA and LIA/ER-B. Also present are a handful of R-B, medieval and post medieval sherds. Quantification, fabric and feature dating are summed-up in [Appendix 1](#).

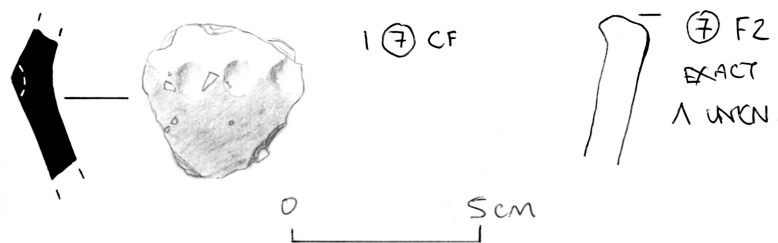


Figure 1. Post Deverel-Rimbury pottery

2. Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition

A single feature sherd belongs to the 'decorated' phase of the post Deverel-Rimbury (PDR) pottery tradition (Barrett 1980). It comprises part of the shoulder angle of a shouldered-jar. It is in a coarse flint-tempered fabric, CF, and is sharply angular with finger-tip impressed decoration *on* the angle ([Fig. 1](#)). Similar vessels occur in 'decorated' PDR assemblages from Hawk's Hill, Leatherhead (Cunliffe 1965, fig. 6.20), Albury (Russell 1989, fig. 15.30), Brooklands (Hanworth & Tomalin 1977, fig. 16.54) and other Surrey sites. Radiocarbon dates associated with this tradition place it in the centuries immediately following the eighth century cal BC (Needham 1996, 137). Two further flint-tempered

Ashtead fabrics, FF and FQ, though paralleled in some Surrey later IA assemblages (e.g. Ashford Prison, Staines: Seager Thomas & Hamilton 2002), are not characteristic of those from the immediate area (eg Hawk's Hill and Reigate Road, Ewell: Cunliffe 1965; Cotton 2001, 12), and may belong to this group as well.

Fabric	Description	Sherd thickness	Colour/firing
<i>Fine Flint (FF)</i>	Sparse (5-7%) medium to coarse sand-sized burnt flint.	c 5mm	Red brown to buff surfaces and dark grey core.
<i>Flint and sand (FQ)</i>	Sparse (5-7%) medium to coarse sand-size burnt flint (coarser than fabric FF), rare (<1%) small pebble-sized burnt flint and common (25%) fine to medium quartz sand.	8-10mm	Hard. Dark grey brown to grey brown surfaces and dark grey brown core.
<i>Coarse Flint (CF)</i>	Sparse (3-5%) medium sand-sized to small pebble size sized burnt flint and common (20-25%) fine to medium quartz sand.	6-10mm	Red brown to dark grey surfaces and dark grey core.
<i>Greensand (GS)</i>	Moderate (10%) medium to coarse sand-sized greensand and calcite fragments, burnt-out on the interior surface of vessel 2 and the interior and exterior surfaces of vessel 3.	5-7mm	Buff to dark grey brown exterior surfaces and dark grey core.
<i>Chalk and Chaff (C)</i>	Rare (2%) medium to coarse sand-sized chalk and moderate (10%) burnt-out chaff.	c 10mm	Buff to orange exterior surfaces and dark grey interior surfaces and core.
<i>Sand and siderite (QFe)</i>	Sparse (10%) to very common (30%) fine to medium quartz sand and sparse (5-7%) medium to coarse sand-sized siderite nodules.	6-10mm	Buff to dark grey surfaces and dark grey core.
<i>Sand (Q1)</i>	Very common (30%) fine to medium quartz sand and some (unquantifiable) sand-sized, black-coated quartz. Occasionally burnished.	5-9mm	Grey to dark grey surfaces and core.
<i>Sand (Q2)</i>	Common (25%) medium quartz sand and sparse (5%) coarse quartz sand and unburned coarse sand-sized flint.	7-10mm	Hard. Buff to red exterior surfaces and dark grey interior surfaces and core.
<i>Shell (S)</i>	Sparse to moderate (7-15%) shell burnt out or decalcified on the surface.	9-14mm	Orange surfaces and core (?burnt) or buff to dark grey brown surfaces and dark grey core (unburnt).
<i>Grog (G)</i>	Common (25%) medium sand-sized grog.	c 6mm	Orange surfaces and core (?burnt) or dark grey surfaces and brown core (unburnt)

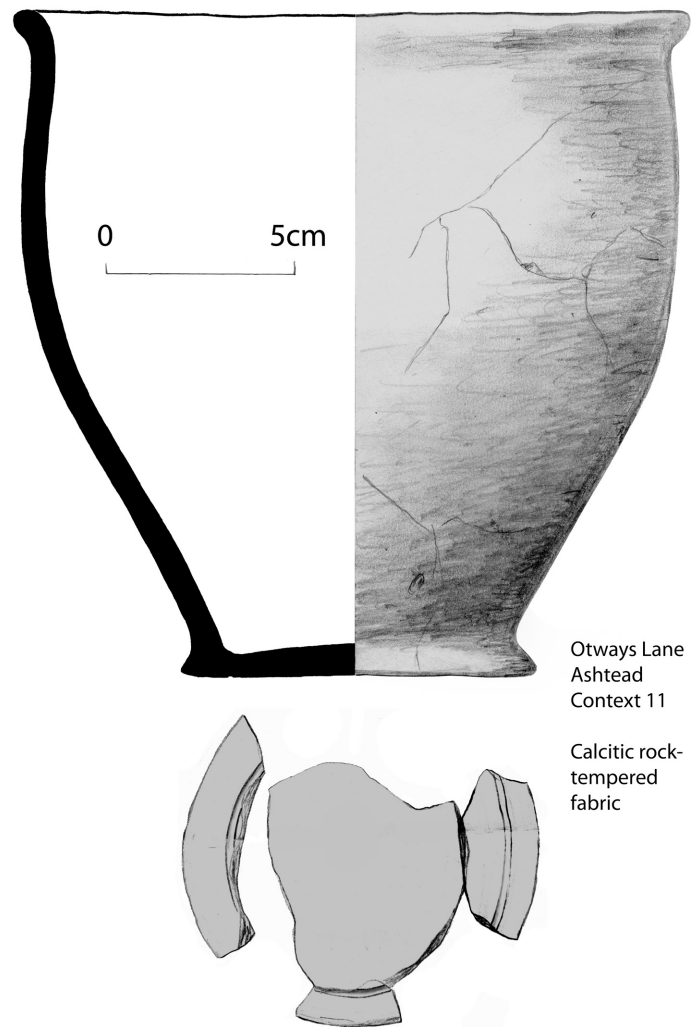
Table 1. Pottery fabrics from Ottways Lane, Ashford.

3. Middle Iron Age

The MIA group comprises five fabrics. Two of these occur in forms which are chronologically diagnostic and the remainder, though present in later contexts as well, have good MIA associations at Ashtead or parallels in later Iron Age assemblages from elsewhere in the county. Best preserved is a small, everted-rim jar. It is in a greensand-tempered fabric, GS, with a burnished exterior surface. It has a rounded shoulder and a flat, expanded base (Fig. 2). These elements have an approximate Surrey

parallel in the MIA assemblage from Hascombe (Thompson 1979, figs 25.1 & 25.17), but, as a complete vessel – and probably because it can be reconstructed completely – it has no exact local parallels. A similar vessel, however, occurs in an assemblage from Fifield Bavant, Wiltshire, dated to the MIA (Cunliffe 1991, 81, fig. A16). Another Ashtead vessel in fabric GS has an internally thickened rim (Fig. 3.3) identical to and characteristic of many later Iron Age vessels from sites in Surrey (eg West Clandon: Frere 1946, fig. 2) and elsewhere in southeast England (eg Bigbury, Kent: Thompson 1983, fig. 11.58).

Figure 2. Middle Iron Age jar in greensand/ calcitic rock-tempered fabric



Also partially reconstructable is a small jar in a sand and siderite fabric, QFe. It has a rounded shoulder and a short flared neck (Fig. 3.4). Similar vessels in sideritic fabrics from Ashford Prison (Seager Thomas & Hamilton 2002) and Brooklands (Hanworth & Tomalin 1977, fig 19.145), both major MIA sites, place it firmly in the same tradition as the foregoing vessels. The form also occurs in the later IA assemblage from

Bigbury (Thompson 1983, fig. 11.76). Evidence for the date of the remaining fabrics in this group is less clear. One, fabric C, is chalk and chaff-tempered; it is represented by a single sherd found with vessel 2 and is assumed to be of the same or an earlier date. The other two, fabric Q1 and fabric Q2, are sandy. Fabric Q1 is friable. At Ashtead it occurred in LIA/ER-B and later contexts only but similar fabrics are present in many Surrey MIA assemblages (e.g. Ashford Prison: Seager Thomas & Hamilton 2002). By contrast fabric Q2 is hard. An unillustrated rim-sherd in it from ditch 6 could belong to a MIA saucepan-pot or a LIA closed-mouth jar, but, like fabric C, fabric Q2 occurred with vessel 2 and must date from the same period or earlier.

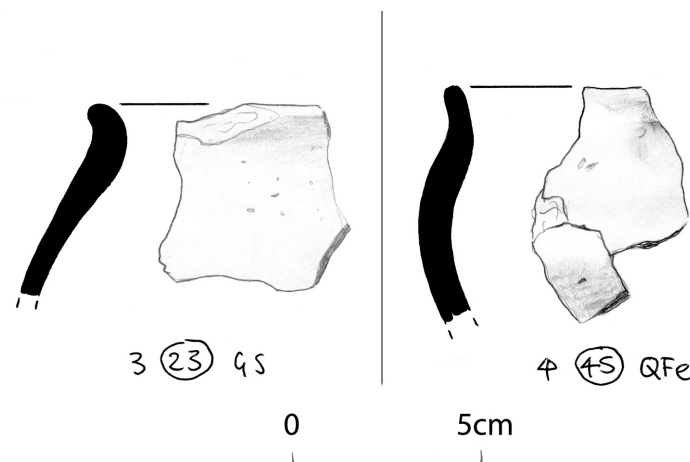


Figure 3. Middle Iron Age pottery

4. Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British

Two feature sherds date to the LIA/E-RB period. The first of these is in a shell-tempered fabric, S, and comprises part of a large closed-mouth jar (Fig. 4.5). A similar vessel comes from Purberry Shot, Ewell, and the fabric was present at nearby Reigate Road (Lowther 1949, fig. 18.23; Cotton 2001, 13). Both occurred at Anstiebury (Thompson 1979, 260, fig 7.14). These sites yielded first century AD assemblages, the Anstiebury group falling after rather than before the Roman Conquest. Locally shell-tempering may date from earlier in the millennium, however, and should be treated with caution when used as a chronological indicator. The second Ashtead LIA/E-RB feature sherd belongs to the East Sussex or Eastern Atrebatian pottery tradition (Green 1980; Cunliffe 1991, 151). It is in a grog-tempered fabric, G, identical to some variants of the eponymous Sussex fabric, and decorated with an 'eyebrow' motif comprising two shallow-tooled arcs and a horizontal line (Fig. 4.6).

Sussex parallels for it occur in assemblages from Bishopstone, where it has LIA associations (Hamilton 1977, fig. 52; Green 1980, 72), and Newhaven, where it has ER-B associations (Green 1976). It also occurs alongside first century AD shell-tempered fabrics in the Reigate Road assemblage (Cotton 2001, 13).

(19th December, 2002)

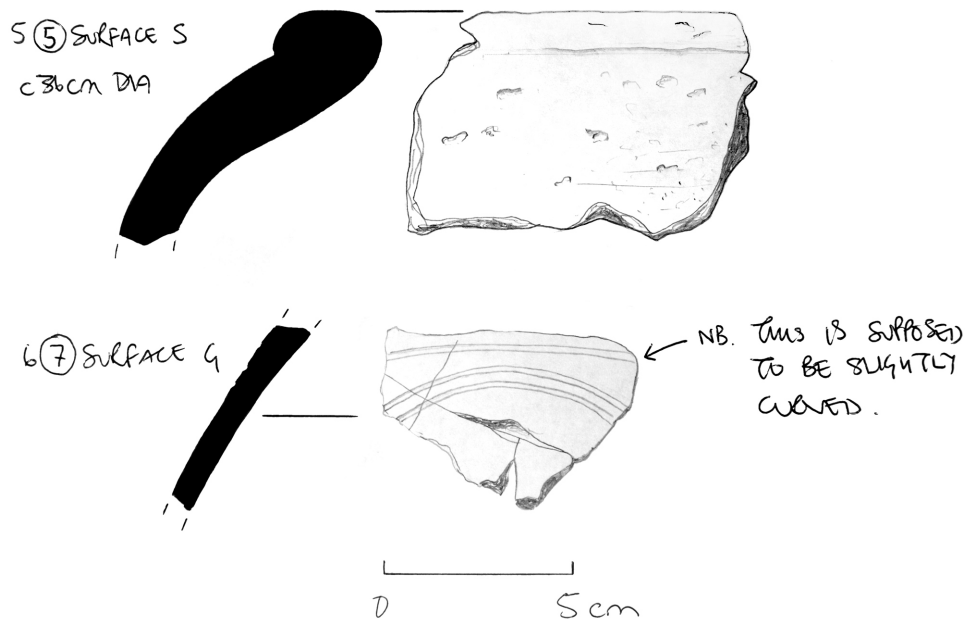


Figure 4. Late Iron Age/ Romano-British pottery

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Appendix 1. Quantification and dating of pottery fabrics and other ceramics from Ottways Lane, Ashted.

Context	FF	FQ <i>LBA/EIA</i>	CF	GS	C	Fabric and likely fabric date								Context <i>TPQ</i>
						QFe <i>MIA-LIA</i>	Q1	Q2	S <i>LIA-ERB</i>	G	GW <i>RB</i>	MQ <i>MED</i>	CBM <i>P MED</i>	
Number of sherds/weight in grams														
2	0	1/41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>LBA/EIA</i>
9	0	0	1/1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>LBA/EIA</i>
21	0	2/28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>LBA/EIA</i>
41	0	1/1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>LBA/EIA</i>
71	0	0	7/75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>LBA/EIA</i>
1	0	0	0	4/109	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
11	0	0	0	57/706	1/4	0	0	1/9	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
13	1/2	0	0	0	0	0	1/2	1/6	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
16/?17	0	0	0	0	0	1/23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
19	0	5/29	0	0	0	1/8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
23	0	0	0	2/39	0	1/13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA/LIA</i>
25	0	0	0	0	0	1/2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
33	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/7	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
45	0	0	0	0	0	2/20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
81	0	0	0	0	0	1/6	0	1/1	0	0	0	0	0	<i>MIA</i>
7	0	2/6	1/21	0	0	7/55	27/231	1/17	13/150	0	0	0	0	<i>LIA</i>
15	1/1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/15	0	0	0	0	<i>LIA</i>
99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/19	0	0	0	0	<i>LIA</i>
5	1/3	1/1	0	1/9	0	0	0	0	2/22	1/14	1/6	0	0	<i>RB</i>
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/5	5/205	0	0	0	0	<i>RB</i>
surface														
89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/4	0	<i>MED</i>
7	0	0	0	0	0	1/6	1/1	0	0	1/26	0	0	1/9	<i>P MED</i>
surface														
69	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/16	<i>P MED</i>
Total	3/6	17/149	9/97	64/863	1/4	15/133	30/241	5/39	17/366	2/40	1/6	1/4	2/25	165/1972